

America's Got Talent
 Is a mega-hit TV show
 Ask Simon... the producer...
 What is talent?
 Singing... Dancing... Magic... Making people laugh... *Entertaining...*

But in the ancient world...
 A *talent* was quite different...
 It had nothing to do with abilities or skills
 It was a measurement of *weight!*
 Roughly 75 pounds

So in the parable,
 the boss... leaving town... entrusted three slaves
 with 10 talents, 5 talents, and 1 talent...
 75 pounds, 325 pounds and 750 pounds... *of Gold!*

Sound like a lot? *it is!*
 In today's market
One talent... is worth more than 2 *million* dollars
Ten talents... 23 million, 885 thousand, 280 dollars.
 Whoa!

The parable barely breezes over the two who doubled his money
 Good job! I'll give you more. Lots more... and he does.
 But the third guy... the one with more than 2 million...
 Dug a hole in the ground and buried it... *for safekeeping.*
 He wasn't a *bad* man. This was a prudent, careful, cautious investor.
 Not about to take chances with the boss's money.
 When his master returns, It's all there, every penny of it.
 I'm sure he was pleased with his accomplishment.
Here it is. All of it, safe and sound.
 But the Boss didn't see it that way

For his careful care of that small fortune

He was thrown into outer darkness...

with weeping and gnashing of teeth.

His penalty couldn't have been worse... even if he'd spent it ***all!***

Quite a lesson for those early disciples...

You see, faith in God is ***not*** about doubling wealth.

It is about ***using what you have***. It is about ***taking risks***.

It's about ***living***.

It's about Jesus ***himself***... what he ***did***... His next stop is ***Jerusalem***

It's about what he ***hopes*** and ***expects*** of his disciples... after he's gone.

It's about ***following*** Jesus... and what it means to be faithful to God...

And so... ultimately... This parable is about ***you***... and ***me***...

The greatest risk of all, it turns out,

is to risk ***nothing***,

not caring deeply and profoundly about anything

not investing deeply

not giving your heart away and in the process risking ***everything***.

A couple years ago, a pastor told me a story

About a risk he took

You see he pastored a small church with meager resources

So he worked two jobs to support his family

He heard God call him to serve a church in another town

So he left his wife and children, quit his second job and went to work

Lord... are you sure you want me to do this?

A few weeks after he started, they called a church meeting

An hour into the discussions... a lone voice cried out.

I move that the pastor resign.

His heart broke... he had given up everything to serve this community
 His home... his family... his income...
 He could not believe what he just heard. He sat in stunned silence
 Not breathing. Heart pounding.

And then he spoke with a quiver...

The motion was not seconded. We are adjourned. And he left.

The subject didn't come again.
 He's served that congregation... for more than a decade.

Because in the middle of giving up *his* life to and serve *these* people
 He took another... *bigger* risk...
He fell in love with them...
Knowing... full well...
 They would break his heart.

The greatest risk of all...
 is to play it safe... to live cautiously and prudently.
 Even if your heart's been broken

Because if you look deeper... you'll find sin... pride and egotism...

Look deeper still and you find sloth... sloth means
 Un-caring... un-loving... un-joyful...
 Never living up to the full potential of our humanity...
 Playing it safe... Investing nothing... Cautious and Prudent...
 Digging a hole and burying our gold in the ground...
 And dying with it like a corpse in a grave...

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said...

The sin of respectable people is running from responsibility.

Bonhoeffer, a pacifist,

took his responsibility seriously.

Joined the German Resistance

and helped plan an assassination attempt on Hitler.

His sense of responsibility... ***cost him his life.***

Jesus warned us...

Playing it safe... not caring... not loving passionately...

not risking anything... is ***worse*** than death...

It is banishment to the outer darkness.

Now for most Americans... religion... personal faith...

is not a high-risk venture.

In fact... for most... it's quite the opposite.

Faith is their personal comfort zone.

Faith... is about personal security...

Both ***here***... and in the ***hereafter***

Faith... isn't even risky.

Just an intellectual belief in God and Jesus

and the putting a check the salvation box.

If we think that Faith, is admitting... There ***is*** a God

and then living a good life... and avoiding bad things.

If that's all there is... religion is a timid, non-risky, ho-hum experience.

But in today's parable... Here Jesus invites us to be his ***disciples***,

to live our lives as fully as possible by investing them, by risking,

by expanding the horizons of our responsibilities.

To be ***his*** men... ***his*** women...

Jesus made it clear...

It's not enough for his disciples to *just believe*...

Disciples must *follow* his.

Following Jesus... Is how we experience a real life in Christ...

It's how we embrace God's investment in these precious lives of ours.

It's how we become bold and brave...

And how we reach high and care deeply...

We are invited into a faith that is never passive... never bland...

but thrilling and terrifying and most of all... *alive!*

What stops us from going *all in*?

Richard Rohr... wrote in Radical Grace...

The greatest enemy of faith is *fear*.

Petty fears control people

Great fears control nations.

And accepting fear... allowing it to be our driving force...

Says to our Lord...

We don't really trust God...

And slowly... over time... we too slip into apathy...

And into the outer darkness

But we don't have to go there

We can chart a new course

We can follow Jesus.

A crew of sailors, on the Amazon River stumbled into a strange sight.

It was like a scene from *The Twilight Zone*.
A Spanish ship... anchored off the coast...
The crew lying motionless across deck of the ship...
As they drew closer, they were horrified...
The men were in terrible physical condition.
The picture of death itself... Lips parched and swollen.
They were literally dying of thirst.

Can we help you? They shouted

Water! Water! We need fresh water!

They looked at each other and yelled back
Lower your buckets and help yourselves.

They must have misunderstood...

No, no! We need FRESH water!

Just lower your buckets and help yourselves

Finally... they dropped their buckets into the ocean waters...
And pulled them up... filled with fresh water!

There at the mouth of the Amazon river, anchored for days,
too far from land to see the coast,
but *not* too far from the mouth of the mighty River,
the sea had fresh water in abundance.
They quit trying... and it nearly killed them.

So... No more burying our talents...
It's time use what God has given us... It's time to truly follow Jesus
and fully experience the great things God has in store... for all of you!